



*“In only one year we have graduated more than 500 students. Those who have been released are better prepared to transition into society. Those who remain inside understand that they have something to contribute and now care about how they impact their environment.”*

– Cyril Walrond, Roots of Success Instructor, Stafford Creek Correctional Facility

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## What is the Roots of Success Program?

Roots of Success is an empowering environmental education and job training program that prepares youth and adults for 100+ environmental jobs and career pathways, successful reentry into their communities, and to improve environmental and social conditions in their communities.

The program, centered around a 10 module course, was created by Dr. Raquel Pinderhughes, Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at San Francisco State University. Dr. Pinderhughes has decades of experience working and teaching in the fields of sustainable development, environmental justice, the green economy and green workforce training, and has developed and directed a wide range of education and training programs for underserved populations.

## Who Does Roots of Success Serve?

Roots of Success is taught in prisons, jails, juvenile facilities, job training programs, reentry programs, high schools, continuation schools, youth programs, and other settings. Since 2010, over 25,000 students have gone through the Roots of Success program; 11,000 of these students were incarcerated when they took the course. Roots of Success is designed for individuals who come from communities heavily impacted by poverty, unemployment, and environmental injustices, have been poorly served/failed by the education system, and face barriers that make it difficult for them to access stable, family-supporting jobs.

For this reason, Roots of Success strengthens individuals' academic and professional skills, increases their environmental literacy, prepares them for 100+ jobs and career pathways in environmental and infrastructure fields, and inspires them to become activists who can improve conditions in their communities and in society more broadly.

**Economic Background:** 75% of students are low-income, 50% no-income.

**Age and Gender:** 25% of students under the age of 24; 21% female and 79% male.

**Education:** 25% of students have no high school diploma or GED; 70% at or below a 10th grade reading and math levels.

**Incarceration Rates:** Almost 50% of students take the course while incarcerated.

## How is Roots of Success Structured?

The Roots of Success course is composed of 10 modules; each module can be taught in 6 hours if no additional content is added. Students receive a Certificate for each module they complete. In some states/cities students receive up to 6 units of college credit for taking the course if they complete all 10 modules.

- 1) Fundamentals of Environmental Literacy
- 2) Water
- 3) Waste
- 4) Transportation
- 5) Energy
- 6) Building
- 7) Health, Food & Agriculture
- 8) Community Organizing & Leadership
- 9) Financial Literacy & Social Entrepreneurship
- 10) Application & Practice

**Instructor-led Versions:** There are customized versions of Roots of Success for: in-school youth, out-of-school youth, incarcerated adults, incarcerated youth, adults in job training and reentry programs, Spanish-speaking populations, low-income social entrepreneurs. These versions are taught by instructors in a classroom setting or via zoom.

**Online Version:** There is also an online version of the Roots of Success course that students access on a computer or tablet without an instructor. Students can take this version of the course at their own pace or be kept on track by a supervising staff person or teacher.

**Instructors Trained and Certified:** Roots of Success classes are taught by instructors who are trained and certified to implement our popular education pedagogy and use our teaching materials which include: Instructor’s Manual, Student Workbook, Multimedia Content, and Green Jobs & Career Pathways Guidebook.

**Customized Version for Prisons:** In prisons, Roots of Success classes are taught by incarcerated instructors to their peers, typically with no staff in the room. Most instructors are paid by DOC to run the Roots of Success program and teach Roots of Success classes as their full time position in the prison. These instructors, many of whom are serving long or life sentences, are trained and certified to teach Roots of Success in a Train the Instructor training that is offered in person within the prison or online. In many of the prisons we train experienced Roots of Success instructors to become “Master Trainers” who then train their peers to be new instructors; this ensures program longevity and reduces costs for DOC administrators.

### What Certifications do Roots of Success Participants Earn?

**Certificates:** Participants receive a Certificate at the end of the program.

**Apprenticeship:** The Department of Labor (DOL) has approved Registered Apprenticeship Standards for Roots of Success.. Eligible Roots of Success instructors— and Roots of Success students in specific programs— will receive a Nationally Recognized Certificate upon completion of the one year Apprenticeship Program. The Apprenticeship designation in the Roots of Success Apprenticeship is: “Environmental Literacy Instructor”. This is the first Federally Recognized Environmental Literacy Instructor Apprenticeship in the United States!

### What is the Pedagogical Approach?

Roots of Success uses a popular education pedagogy to engage students and (1) strengthen their academic literacy; (2) increase their understanding of environmental issues, injustices, problems, and solutions; (3) prepare them for jobs and career pathways in the water, waste, energy, building, transportation, food, health, agriculture, and community organizing sectors of the labor market; and (4) inspire and prepare them to be activists and social entrepreneurs who can improve conditions in their communities and society more broadly.

We begin by defining the environment as “where we live, work, play, pray, learn, advocate, organize, etc.”, including both the built and natural environments. This allows students to build on their existing knowledge and experience and ensures that the content is directly relevant and meaningful for each student. We use a multimedia, activity based approach that engages students and allows us to teach to different learning

styles and levels of literacy. Throughout, the focus is on promoting critical thinking and teamwork by having students work together in small groups. This supports students working together as they think critically about social and environmental conditions, challenges, and injustices, address these challenges, and share ideas they would utilize to implement solutions. In addition, the teaching approach and course content strengthen academic and professional skills, develop leadership skills, connect what people are learning to employment opportunities, and prepare, empower, and inspire students to become involved in efforts to address social and environmental injustices and improve social and environmental conditions.

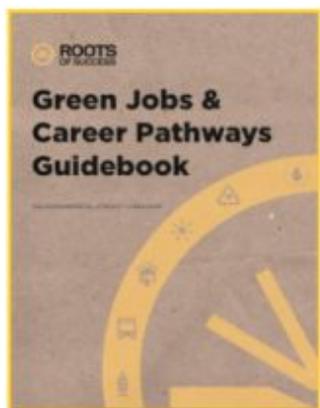
*“As my colleagues and I prepare to teach another Roots of Success class, we are not only bringing a new world to our students but are introducing them to the world; a world they never knew existed, by exposing them to concepts that were previously foreign to the vast majority of them. It is not that they do not have the aptitude or attitude to learn, but have been denied the opportunities. “*

– ROS Instructor

### What Academic and Professional Skills are Acquired Through the ROS Course?

Creativity	Career development	Reading	Policy analysis
Critical thinking	Personal, social, and	Writing	Land use planning
Problem solving	environmental	Math	Interpreting tables,
Lifelong learning	responsibility	Research	charts, and
Decision-making	Advocacy	Teamwork	graphs
Vocabulary	Civic engagement	Engagement	Mapping
Natural science	Leadership	Retention	Public speaking
Environmental literacy	Financial literacy	Information literacy	Digital Literacy
Sustainability	Social entrepreneurship	Data analysis	Test taking
Environmental justice	Communication		
analysis	Collaboration		

### How Does Roots of Success Connect Education to Employment?



#### The “Roots of Success Green Jobs & Career Pathways Guidebook”

familiarizes students with 100+ jobs and career pathways in the water, waste, transportation, energy, building, food, health, and agriculture sectors.

The ROS Guidebook includes detailed information, compiled from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), on job descriptions, basic qualifications, salary ranges, benefits, career ladders, and growth figures. It focuses on meaningful, dignified jobs that provide workers with family supporting wages and occupational mobility over time, most of which do not require a college degree.

**Roots of Success graduates who remain incarcerated have the opportunity to work in sustainability initiatives in their facilities.**



*Individuals..” who take a ten week Roots of Success class while incarcerated ... have the opportunity to apply for jobs in the facility’s Sustainable Practices Lab. About 70% of the 127 ROS graduates have been offered jobs in the Lab and no one can recall anyone turning down the opportunity. This is a great model for turning theory into practice.”* – Joslyn Trivett, Network Manager, Sustainable Prisons Project

### **What is the Impact of the Roots of Success Program?**

A 2021 study conducted by UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy found that “Roots of Success creates transformational change for students, instructors, DOC staff, and their wider communities across many dimensions and fostered individuals’ self-worth, which led to effects both in and outside of correctional facilities.” More specifically, the researchers concluded: \*

#### **Sense of Self:**

- We saw that both students and instructors emerged from the program with an increased sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- Instructors in particular felt empowered by their new identity as a teacher.

#### **Community Engagement & Activism:**

- Participants gained an understanding of social and environmental justice and began to shift their perspectives on these issues.
- Participants started engaging in conservation and justice efforts within the facility.
- We also found that participants felt more empowered to engage in their communities after release.

#### **Social:**

- We found that participants began to exhibit prosocial behaviors including respect, encouragement, and consideration of others and improved relationships inside and outside the facility.
- We also found that there was a reduction in violent encounters and violations.

#### **Career & Financial Preparedness:**

- Participants learned about and gained interest in green jobs and acquired the skills and confidence needed to pursue job opportunities.

\*Examining Transformational Change: Roots of Success Environmental Literacy and Work Readiness Program in Carceral Settings”, Ehrenpreis, Gebrekristos, and Saunders, Goldman School of Public Policy, UC Berkeley, 2021.

### **Roots of Success Helps Programs Meet Their Goals**

- 100% of program directors observed positive behavioral changes in participants
- 99.4% of program directors said ROS improved their student's academic skills
- 98% of program directors thought participants were better prepared for job interviews
- 98% of instructors said ROS helped them reach their goals
- 95% of instructors said ROS increased their ability to help students learn about environmental problems and solutions
- 90% of instructors would recommend ROS to other programs
- 89% of instructors said ROS improved student's communication skills
- 89% of instructors said ROS improved student's public speaking skills

### **Roots of Success Engages, Prepares, and Inspires Students**

After taking the Roots of Success course:

- 98% of graduates had a better understanding of environmental problems and solutions
- 98% understand the root causes of environmental problems and injustices
- 98% are inspired and empowered to work to improve their communities
- 97% felt a shift in their perspective, an increase in self-awareness, and a heightened consideration of their relationships with others and their communities
- 97% deepened their sense of responsibility to make the world better
- 96% plan to share what they learned in the course with others
- 96% understand how green jobs fit into building a more just and healthier world
- 95% are excited to work in environmental and environmental/social justice fields
- 93% are more interested in community engagement
- 88% are more comfortable taking tests
- 86% strengthened their academic skills
- 85% feel more motivated in educational settings

### **Roots of Success Supports Student's Professional Development**

After taking the Roots of Success course:

- 98% of graduates feel better prepared for job interviews
- 97% of graduates are more knowledgeable about green careers
- 96% of graduates are motivated to pursue employment opportunities they did not previously know were accessible to them
- 90% of graduates increased their professional vocabulary
- 85% of graduates feel more prepared for employment opportunities
- 87% of graduates feel more comfortable working in teams
- 75% of graduates found employment within 3 months
- 74% of instructors said ROS prepared students for the job market
- 70% of graduates remained employed 6 months later
- 70% of graduates feel more comfortable speaking in public
- Among these graduates, 86% were making better wages than in previous jobs and were in jobs with greater upward mobility

## What Employment Opportunities do Roots of Success Graduates Have in Prison?

- Composting
- Gardening
- Landscaping
- Beekeeping
- Recycling
- Plumbing
- Carpentry
- Water Efficiency Management
- HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning)
- Electrical Energy Reduction Management
- Renewable Energy Management
- Environmental Research Projects
- Habitat Restoration
- Conservation Initiatives
- Data Entry
- Bike and Wheelchair Restoration
- Teaching Roots of Success classes

## What Employment Opportunities do Roots of Success Graduates Have Outside Prison?

*Roots of Success graduates have been hired in environmental and infrastructure fields in multiple sectors of the economy.*

### Environment

San Francisco Department of Environment  
San Francisco Parks and Recreation  
Bay Area Climate Collaborative  
Boys and Girls Clubs of the Peninsula  
Greencorps Chicago

Joule Energy  
Lawrence Fine Art Services  
Luminalt Solar  
Modern Aire Mechanical  
ProVoltz Solar  
Real Good Solar  
Recurve/Advanced Home Energy  
Segway  
Skytech Solar  
Solar Alternatives

Bare Escentuals Mineral Makeup  
Big Delicious Planet Catering  
Bite Cafe  
Chicago Botanic Garden Fruit and Vegetable Island  
Chicago Botanic Garden Green Youth Farm  
Chicago Food Co-Operative  
Chicago Specialty Gardens  
City Farm Resource Center  
Cook County Boot Camp Farm  
Ecumenical Hunger Program

### Water and Waste

Bay Area Appliance  
Gardens That Grow  
Gilmans Kitchens+Baths  
EarthBaby Compostable Diaper Service  
Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma  
Greencorps Chicago  
GreenWaste Recovery  
Recology San Mateo County  
The Green Project of New Orleans  
Building Materials and Recycling

### Building

Alcal-Arcade Specialty Contracting Inc.  
Bay Area Appliance  
Contractors Labor Pool  
Gilmans Kitchens+Baths  
Green Thumbs Up  
JobTrain  
Marcan Enterprise Inc.  
Modern Aire Mechanical  
Nolmar Corp  
SDI Insulation  
Sequoia Construction  
Southern Environmental Solutions  
Whole House Building Supply

Farmedhere, LLC  
Gardens That Grow  
Garfield Park Conservatory  
Green Thumbs Up  
Iron Street Urban Farm  
Joshua Charles Catering  
Little Veggie Patch  
Native Foods Café  
Passion Café  
Pilsen Community Market  
Provenance Food and Wine  
Takashi Restaurant  
The Chicago Lights Urban Farm  
The Jackson Park Urban Farm and Community Allotment Garden  
Uncommon Ground Green Roof Restaurant  
Windy City Harvest

### Energy and Transportation

Alcal-Arcade Solar Contracting  
Bay Area Appliance  
Bay Area Climate Collaborative  
Clean Solar  
Danlin Corporation Solar Contractor

### Food, Health, & Agriculture

Advocates for Urban Agriculture  
Altgeld Gardens Urban Farm  
Angelic Organics

## Community Organizing & Leadership

Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet  
Advocates for Urban Agriculture  
Chicago Botanic Garden  
Community Housing Partnership  
Concordia Place  
Ecumenical Hunger Program  
Greencorps Chicago  
Growing Power

## Other

Always Best Care Senior Services  
Center for Independence of Individuals with Disabilities  
Dog-Alicious Pet Care  
East Palo Alto Senior Center  
Farmers Insurance  
Peninsula Interfaith Action  
Redwood City Public Library  
San Mateo County Clerk Assessor

San Mateo County Department of Housing  
San Mateo County Works Program  
The Way We Grow Infant Center  
Urban Solutions  
Women's Initiative for Self Employment

**And hundreds more!**

## What is the Cost of the Roots of Success Program?

Roots of Success is extremely affordable to implement in carceral and reentry settings. There are only three costs to implementing the program:

- 1) **Train-the-Instructor Training** (one full day, includes all teaching materials needed to teach the course) This is a one time cost.
- 2) **Student Workbook Pre-Apprenticeship Registration** (for each student in the program) This is an ongoing cost, paid each time a new student is enrolled in the Pre-Apprenticeship.
- 3) **Green Jobs and Career Pathway Guidebook** (includes detailed descriptions of 100+ jobs and career pathways based on Bureau of Labor statistics and information) One time cost for each instructor.

Contact us for current pricing information.

## What Content is Covered in the Ten Roots of Success Modules?



1) The **Fundamentals of Environmental Literacy** Module serves as an introduction. It helps students think about the interconnectedness between natural systems, biological systems and social systems and the connection between human activity and the environment. The focus is on the economy, natural and built environments, institutions, extraction and use of natural resources, global warming, climate change, bioaccumulation, synergistic effects, how decision makers evaluate environmental issues, understanding cost-benefit analysis, the precautionary principle, how environmental decisions affect communities differently, climate justice, and how people advocate to improve environmental conditions in their community. The job readiness exercise focuses on understanding career pathways and ladders.

2) The **Water** Module introduces students to basic concepts and issues relevant to water extraction, management and use, the characteristics of water, how water is used in different settings, the importance of water for humans and other species, the water cycle, water use in agriculture, modern water management approaches, the inequitable distribution of freshwater, ground water extraction, wastewater management, and water contamination. The job readiness exercise focuses on students identifying their professional strengths and weaknesses and developing a plan for improving professional weaknesses. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the water sector.





3) The **Waste** Module introduces students to a range of issues related to waste management and resource recovery. Students learn about the waste stream and how it has changed over time, bury and burn strategies, problems that stem from the way institutions and individuals dispose of products and materials at the end of their identified lifecycles, alternative waste management approaches, resource recovery, appropriate technologies, and the 4 Rs. The job readiness exercise focuses on job search skills and strategies, including identifying and responding to job listings. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the waste recovery sector.

4) The **Transportation** Module helps students understand land use planning, the development of transportation systems and infrastructures, diverse transportation modes and transit systems. The module focuses on renewable and nonrenewable resources, the role of fossil fuels in modern transportation systems and vehicles, problems stemming from urban sprawl, greenhouse gas emissions, and air contamination, policies that promote transit-oriented development, alternative fuels, and transportation justice. The job readiness exercise focuses on resume writing. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sustainable transportation sector.



5) The **Energy** Module helps students understand diverse energy sources, the principles of electricity, the role of energy in the world and in our lives, and the economic, political, environmental, and social factors that influence energy decisions. Students are introduced to the characteristics of energy and electricity, basic concepts and issues relevant to energy systems, the role of fossil fuels and nuclear energy in modern electricity systems, greenhouse gasses and their impacts, problems associated with the burning of fossil fuels, approaches and technologies that reduce energy use, renewable energy sources and policies, and climate justice. The job readiness exercise helps students write a cover letter to an employer. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sustainable energy sector.

6) The **Building** Module introduces students to land use planning, building, and green building concepts. The focus is on built environments, building design and construction, building materials, building systems, embodied energy, indoor air quality, energy and water consumption in buildings, environmental and public health impacts of conventional building practices, green building principles and practices, improving building efficiency, and resource conservation in the construction, operation, and deconstruction of buildings. The job readiness exercise focuses on preparing for a job interview and mock interviews. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the building sector. The module supports students studying for the Building Performance (BPI) exam.



7) The **Health, Food & Agriculture** Module focuses on human health, food systems, and agricultural production. Students learn about health, nutrition, local and global food systems, sustainable agricultural practices, industrial agriculture, factory farming, GMO crops, processed and fast food, food deserts, how to increase health and food justice, local food systems, urban agriculture, backyard and community gardening, and health education. The job readiness

envision their local food system and think about how new businesses and initiatives could improve health and food access in their communities. In addition, students learn about career pathways and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sustainable food, agriculture, and public health sectors.

8) The **Community Organizing & Leadership** Module introduces students to civic engagement, advocacy, community organizing, and leadership approaches, strategies, and skill sets. The module helps students understand the roles and responsibilities of an effective advocate and organizer. Students identify the root causes of problems, build a community based organization, craft a mission statement, identify organizational goals and values, strategize campaigns, and simulate door-to-door campaigns. The job readiness exercise has students think about career pathways in advocacy, community organizing, and civic engagement.



9) The **Financial Literacy & Social Entrepreneurship** Module focuses on personal financial literacy and on basic business practices, skills sets, and green business principles. In the first part of the module, students' focus on their personal finances and learn how to analyze income and expenses, create a budget, set financial goals, deal with debt and predatory lenders, establish savings, and effectively manage their finances. In the second part of the module, students develop green business ideas and business plans, and focus on how to operate a small green business, effective communication skills, business models, basic accounting, target markets, hiring staff, financial reporting, and recruiting advisors.

10) The **Application & Practice** Module serves as the conclusion. It provides students with an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in all the other modules to real world situations by envisioning and designing all of the elements of a sustainable, healthy, and just city block.



*“Women enter these walls with shattered lives and scattered focus. Roots of Success has proven to be instrumental in providing a compass, guiding students as they discover a healthy and sustainable direction for the future. Women graduate with an eagerness to participate in their own lives. Roots of Success gives beyond, to a place where they can reach out and rejoin their community on a pro-social, eco-forward, career pathway.”*

– Lori Moseley, Instructor; Coffee Creek Women’s Correctional Facility



Ricky Osbourne / Sustainable Prisons Project